

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 ALGIER 00108 191510Z

53

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SAM-01 ACDA-05 IO-11 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EUR-12 ARA-06 SAJ-01 /099 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3659

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0108

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AO, AG, US

SUBJECT: ANGOLA: ALGERIAN PERCEPTIONS

1. IN JANUARY 16 CONVERSATION WITH SECRETARY GENERAL OF FOREIGN MINISTRY ABDELMALEK BENHABYLES, HE MADE FOLLOWING REMARKS ABOUT ANGOLA.

2. ALGERIAN AND U.S. VIEWS SEEMED IRRECONCILABLE, BUT WE SHOULD HAVE NO MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ALGERIAN POSITION. IT WAS IDEOLOGICAL AND LONG-STANDING. ALGERIANS HAD NO STRATEGIC OR GEOPOLITICAL GOALS. THEY WERE NOT TRYING TO CREATE A PRO-ALGERIAN ENCLAVE OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. THEY WERE SUPPORTING MPLA, AND HAD FOR MANY YEARS, BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT IT BEST REPRESENTED PEOPLE OF ANGOLA AND IN BEST POSITION TO GOVERN THAT COUNTRY EFFECTIVELY. US POLICY ON OTHER HAND WAS REFLECTION OF OUR CONTEST WITH SOVIETS. HE UNDERSTOOD OUR CONCERN, BUT IT MEANT WE WERE OPERATING ON DIFFERENT LEVELS AND THAT WAS WHY WE WERE IN DISAGREEMENT.

3. IN ANY EVENT, WE SHOULD NOT MAKE MISTAKE OF THINKING THAT IDEOLOGY WAS REALLY A BASIS FOR STRATEGIC EXPANSION. NO AFRICAN STATE WANTED TO BE SATELLITE OF EITHER EASTERN OR WESTERN IDEOLOGIES. SOVIETS, AS RESULT OF THEIR HEAVY INVOLVEMENT, WERE GOING TO FINISH CONSIDERABLY LESS POPULAR  
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PAGE 02 ALGIER 00108 191510Z

IN ANGOLA THAN U.S. WHOEVER LOWERED HIMSELF TO LEVEL OF SUCH

TRIBAL CONFLICTS GOT SMEARED. OUR BEST BET WAS TO REMAIN ALOOF AND LET SOVIETS TAKE OPPROBRIUM WHICH ALWAYS ATTACHED TO THE POWER WHICH INTERVENED. WE NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT NETO. ALGERIANS KNEW HIM AND HE WAS NON-ALIGNED.

4. I SAID HEAVY SOVIET AND CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA MADE US VERY DUBIOUS ABOUT NETO'S NON-ALIGNMENT. MPLA WAS FURTHERMORE MINORITY FACTION. WE WANTED AFRICAN SOLUTION TO PROBLEM, AND HAD HOPED AFRICANS WOULD SETTLE IT THEMSELVES. OUR CONCERN AND OUR PRESENT INVOLVEMENT WERE LARGELY RESULT OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT. WE COULD NOT STAND IDLY BY AND WATCH THEM IMPOSE MINORITY FACTION ON COUNTRY.

5. BENHABYLES SAID SOVIETS AND CUBANS HAD BECOME SO HEAVILY INVOLVED BECAUSE OF SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT. NETO HAD TURNED TO THEM NOT BECAUSE HE WANTED THEM IN ANGOLA BUT BECAUSE HE HAD NEEDED HELP. HE DID NOT THINK SOVIETS HAD TROOPS ON THE GROUND, ALTHOUGH HE UNDERSTOOD THERE WERE CUBANS FIGHTING THERE.

6. BENHABYLES THEN SWITCHED TO SAHARA (REPORTED SEPARATELY) AND BECAUSE TIME WAS RUNNING OUT, WE DID NOT GET INTO NUMBERS GAME OR CHRONOLOGY. AM SENDING ABERKANE COPY OF SECRETARY'S JANUARY 14 PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS ON ANGOLA REPORTED IN DEPARTMENT'S 10223.

7. COMMENT: BENHABYLES IS THE MOST DISPASSIONATE OF ALGERIANS AND HIS CALM ACCEPTANCE OF OUR DIFFERENCE OF VIEWS ON ANGOLA IS NOT REFLECTED IN LOCAL PRESS, WHICH LAMBASTES US AND OUR FRIENDS ON THIS ISSUE AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. IT DOES CORRESPOND, HOWEVER, WITH OUR VIEW THAT ANGOLA HAS TAKEN A BACK SEAT AS FAR AS ALGERIAN LEADERSHIP CONCERNED (OUR 98). ALGERIANS ARE SMARTING FROM DEFEAT AT ADDIS, BUT MY AFRICAN COLLEAGUES THINK THEY REALIZED RADICALS WERE NOT GOING TO WIN THERE ANYWAY, AND DECIDED NOT TO COMMIT THEMSELVES FULLY. THEY SENT YAKER TO TKAE THE BRUNT BECAUSE THEY WERE AFRAID TO RISK BOUTEFLIKA'S OR BOUMEDIENE'S PRESTIGE, ACCORDING THIS VIEW. PARKER

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